Maryland Historical Trust
Determination of Eligibility Form

Property Name: Thistle Mill \ Bartgis Bros. \ Simkins Industries **Inventory Number:** BA-144

Address: 201 River Road **Historic District:** ___ Yes X No

City: Catonsville **Zip Code:** 21228 **County:** Baltimore County

USGS Quadrangle(s): Ellicott City

Property Owner: Simkins Industries **Tax Account ID Number:** 0114100700

Tax Map Parcel Number(s): 1145 **Tax Map Number:** 100

Project: Simkins Dam Removal **Agency:** NOAA

Agency Prepared By: NOAA

Preparer's Name: _____ **Date Prepared:** 03/23/2010

Documentation Is Presented In: _____

Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: ___ **Eligibility Recommended** X **Eligibility Not Recommended**

Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D **Considerations:** ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G

Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:

Name of the District/Property: _____

Inventory Number: _____ **Eligible:** ___ Yes **Listed:** ___ Yes

Site Visit by MHT Staff: X Yes ___ No **Name:** Kurtze, Henry, Sager **Date:** 11/17/2009

Description of Property and Justification: ***(Please attach map and photo)***

The description and history that follow were prepared by Lisa Wingate. The eligibility assessment and recommendation were developed through consultation between NOAA and the MHT Office of Preservation Services.

Description:

The former Thistle Mill / Bartgis Bros. / New Haven Board & Carton / Simkins Industries' property is located at 201 River Road in Ilchester, more commonly considered Catonsville. Most of the 55-acre site is located on the Baltimore County side of the Patapsco River, though a smaller portion lies on the Howard County side between the river and railroad tracks. The steep sides of the river valley, and foliated overgrowth that has developed over the years of disuse, and numerous additions have made it challenging to see an overall view of the factory and housing in the mill village. The complex is best viewed from above or from the Howard County side of the river in winter. The whole mill complex is difficult to see from River Road or the two intersecting roads nearby, though the top of the factory can be seen from Hilltop Road.

Thistle is set at a gentle curve in the river within the narrow, steep-sided, scenic river valley. The property is bounded to the south by the railroad, and to the west by undeveloped land of the Patapsco State Park, to the north by State Park, to the east by residences and Patapsco State Park. The Patapsco River runs west to east through the property, between the mill building

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MHT Comments: Lacks integrity.

Jonathan Sager — **Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services** — 3/23/2010 — **Date**

P Kurtze — **Reviewer, National Register Program** — 3/25/10 — **Date**

complex and power plant. The former mill and manufacturing plant area (approximately 13 acres) is located between River Road and the Patapsco River, close to river level, banked into the hillside. It is adjacent to the Ilchester vehicular bridge, and adjacent to the B&O RR (now CSX), bridge and tunnel, bordering the southern edge of the complex.

The primary elements of the and manufacturing plant, which are described below in detail, are: dam, millrace, filter house, 1820s original mill, c. 1882 brick Board Mill structure, c. 1899 Silk Mill, and power plant. In addition to these, there are numerous ancillary and infill buildings and structures throughout the property. These include sheds, loading docks, truck scale house, concrete holding tanks, and various ruins and remnants. Across River Road to the north are the remnants of the 19th and early 20th century textile mill village stepping up the hill. The remainder of the site is largely undeveloped, mostly wooded open space, very hilly with steep slopes. A cemetery remains atop the ridge.

DAM: The dam spans the Patapsco River with stone abutments at each bank. It is located close to the intersection of Thistle Road and River Road on the Baltimore County side. The construction date of the existing dam is not precisely known. The original dam was blown up with dynamite in 1857, rebuilt that year, washed out by The Great Flood of 1868 and rebuilt. It was rebuilt again in 1887 and after a washout in 1889. The dam was damaged by Agnes in 1972 and repaired, leaving to speculation what, if any, sections of the original dam remain.

The concrete dam is angled across the Patapsco River, slightly off perpendicular to its flow with the northeast abutment further downstream than its southwest abutment. The concrete has a fairly large aggregate mix. Boring tests undertaken in four spots on the Howard County end of the dam in 2010 show concrete construction, with some stone fill, consistent with surface observation. Engineers also reported seeing concrete at least 12" thick at the east end of the dam. No evidence was found to support reports that the dam is a timber, log crib or hollow frame dam parged with concrete in the early 1940s.

The dam is approximately 300' wide. Estimates of its height vary according to the source of the information. The crest is approximately 12', and there is a concrete apron that appears to be of the same material extending downstream. The dead capacity behind the Thistle / Simkins dam has been greatly decreased by the build-up of silt; the water behind the dam is very shallow, only a few feet deep.

The rectangular abutments on each end of the dam are gray, rubble stone that have been at least partially rebuilt and repointed. It is assumed the abutments are earth and rock-filled. Documented dates of construction and repairs have not been uncovered, though earth and rock-filled dam abutments with stone facing were very common in the 19th century, especially where river bottoms were either rocky or a smooth flat ledge. A concrete fish ladder was added along the western bank of the rectangular abutment constructed in 1997.

MILL RACE: At the east end of the dam, interlocking, corrugated steel plates have been pressed vertically into the streambed to deflect a portion of the river water into the millrace. The once operable metal control mechanism is set atop a wood and concrete gate. The gate bears a nameplate

Rodney Hunt Machine Co.

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Orange, Mass.
N.[?].I.

According to a brief online history, "The Rodney Hunt Company, founded in Orange, Massachusetts in the 1840s, built textile machinery, water wheels, turbines, and other specialty industrial products."

Water passing the head gate is channeled east parallel to the river in the millrace. The existing poured concrete, wood and steel I-beam head gate structure is connected to rubble stone walls on both sides that appear to be 19th century, with portions repointed and/or rebuilt. There are different levels of stone near the top, implying that the wall was raised in layers over time. There is a poured concrete retaining wall in front of the stone wall at the juncture where it meets the dam. The abutment wall against the riverbank is parallel to the flow of the millrace, partially parged with concrete, and then as it curves back to the natural bedrock stone of the hill, this riverbank forms the north side of the millrace. A gray rubble stone wall, several feet wide and capped in concrete, forms the south wall of the race. Interrupting the walkway atop this wall and inserted immediately before a concrete overflow service spillway is a stepped, poured concrete chute outlet, topped with large wood timbers (approx. 22" x 12"). This structure appears to have once held either an operable gate that functioned guillotine-style or more likely an undershot water wheel. There are different mixes and vintages of the concrete used along the race wall, implying alterations over time. This wall connects to a footpath that leads east downstream to the mill buildings.

Steel beams have been set across the width of the race at approximately the middle of its length to serve as flashboards and a trash track. Just beyond the steam girders, an angled concrete wall separated the width of the millrace that previously provided water flowing down to and under the main mill building. Inside the portion cordoned off by the concrete wall, the impounded water was filtered through large sand beds within the Filter House, the western-most building. Filtered water was transported by large galvanized pipe; sections still remain of a large pipe running parallel to the water flow. The angled concrete wall remains intact, though the metal railing seen in the c. 1940 aerial photo had been removed, as has the water tower (approx. seven stories tall) that stood at the east end of the Filter House. The remains of a large, round, concrete, circular base for the water tower are still visible between the Filter House and the western addition to the original mill building.

FILTER HOUSE: Sited at the upstream end of the mill complex, this two-and-half story, five-bay wide, stone building, seen in the 1871 photo in Harwood's Impossible Challenges II, has been much altered by the ravages of storm damage and multiple reconstruction efforts. It was likely an early pump house, and has a relatively shallow-pitched gable roof running parallel to the river. It appears as though the original 19th century construction was traditional Ellicott City granite rubble (large blocks interspersed with smaller filler rubble). Most of the fenestration and openings caused by flood damage and renovation have been filled in with concrete block (approximately 60% of south wall), and there is Portland parging smeared over many sections. There is a rectangular (approx 10' x15') poured concrete tank with a doorway on the west end of the building; the walls extend 5' above grade and water rests inside.

The original interior of the Filter House has been gutted, and what remains is part of the sand filtration system used to clean the river water before it was introduced into papermaking. Inside are large concrete tanks filled with sand, visible through a central doorway at the east end.

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ORIGINAL MILL: The original four-story stone mill spanned the millrace, its gable roof perpendicular to the river. Fridge and Morris Bros. built the 50' x 100' mill on 106 acres. The building is banked into the hillside with approximately two and a half stories above the level of River Road. In the 20th century, trucks loaded and unloaded at this middle level. The Bartgis Bros. name is clearly visible near the gable, spelled out in cream-colored glazed or terra cotta bricks, a reminder of the plant's former owner. On the river side, south of the millrace, the structure has an additional ground floor, making it appear to be five stories tall. Original stone jack arches can be found, but many of the windows have been altered or filled with masonry, with steel frames for smaller windows inserted occasionally.

There are two vertical seams in the stonework of unknown origin, though they likely date to a former attached tower for an electrically-powered, freight elevator on the SW corner of the original mill building. A hydraulic elevator operated in the SW corner from cs. 1970s - 2007.

In the 19th century, a two-bay wide tower, replacing a stone structure (similar to the Filter House in massing and orientation, shown on 1850 map, and seen in the 1871 photo) was added to the southeast corner, extending a full story above the roof eaves, though it is unknown whether this tower was for circulation or sanitary purposes. This tower was removed between 1936 and the early 1940s, probably when the large addition was constructed on the west side. At that time, a projecting, concrete drip course and an extra half story of brick were added atop the original stone walls above the fourth floor level, along with a new, more shallow pitch roof. Raising the roof in that way converted the attic into another floor of production space. Steam turbines ran the equipment in the 1940s.

A large addition of steel frame and brick red, hollow, terra cotta block, was erected along the west side, approximately doubling the size of the original mill building. It appears as though the current construction in that location may have replaced some earlier (post 1936) structure, as the steel frame is exposed on the west side, and the top floor infill is concrete block instead of terra cotta block. Windows remaining in this western addition after the fire are eight-light, center-pivot, steel-framed sash. The roof is almost flat with minimal pitch to collect precipitation. Interior partition walls are concrete block. On the south side of the terra cotta block building, fire damage collapse has exposed the staircase that is wood above the first floor.

On the west side, there is a small concrete block, one-and-a-half story shed with low-pitched roof. Four other small concrete block structures are seen along the south side. They functioned, according to Jeff Lester, as two 50,000-gallon "white water" tanks – so called as they contained paper fibers, and were located between the Filter House and the original mill. Multiple storage tanks held clean water – one in a railroad car, two in the basement, and three chests were located in the power plant. The "white water" was pumped up to the fourth floor of the original mill to have the fiber removed, then sent to the "white water" tanks. Clean water was used in manufacturing operations and it was recirculated to clean it again for reuse, as Simkins had to pay sewer fees for any water disposal. No obvious locations of millrace outfalls were identified, though two 10" outfall pipes leading south toward the river, and eight pipes were mentioned in a permit report.

CA. 1882 BRICK BOARD MILL: Surrounded by supplemental structures, from the outside this building might go unnoticed, save a single window and doorway with segmental lintels under a loading dock roof. The window retains its segmental brick arched

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lintel and bullnosed wooden frame (as does the adjacent doorway), but not original sash. During its use as a recycled paperboard production facility, this building, combined with the more modern ones that surround it, was called the Board Mill. Part of the roof is missing.

According to Jeff Lester, the northwest corner of the building had collapsed and was rebuilt, combining it with a longer infill building to the north. Now the two-story high space is 13 bays wide, and the upper level windows are six-pane steel sash or have been filled with masonry. A few of the second floor timbers project along the north wall. Deep troughs in the concrete floor remain where water from the race (that had been cleaned in the Filter House) was circulated and then recycled over again. Beyond the main production space, there are various levels inside along the east and north sides, accessed by ramps and doorways.

CA. 1899 SILK MILL: The long, low stone building, 26-bays wide, runs parallel to the river near the east end of the site, and measures 227' x 76'. A tall level rests atop a raised basement level, creating a building height between a one and two-story structure. The square, lower level windows, as well as the larger rectangular windows of the main level, are filled mostly with masonry now, though some contain glass block. The mortar has been repointed with a raised, grapevine joint. The stonework is dark gray with lighter gray corner quoins and lintels along the river side. The lighter gray decorative detail stone appears to be homogenous stone like Ellicott City granite, cut with a rusticated finish. The darker gray stone used in the body of the building is a sedimentary rock, and appears in both ashlar and rubble infill.

The roof is notable for its series of 13 wall-to-wall, banked, corrugated fiberglass clerestory windows, facing north, to provide even natural daylight across the factory floor. The resulting profile creates a serrated, saw-tooth edge at the top of the long, stone side walls.

POWER PLANT: The Power Plant is located across the Patapsco River on the Howard County side and banked into the steep riverbank. There are approximately five courses of impressively tooled, large, rusticated, ashlar blocks above water level. Atop this base remain several feet of rubble stone wall, patched at intervals and capped with a wide band of poured concrete. This exposed stone base, more ornate than any found on the Baltimore County side of the river in the main portion of the mill complex, appears to be 100+ years old. Its original function remains undocumented. The large, rectangular, granite block base may have been a railroad retaining wall.

The Power Plant's stone footprint is trapezoidal, angled upstream, potentially to deflect floodwaters. The concrete and metal construction atop the stone base is 20th century. The power plant provided both the power and the heat for the operations on the Baltimore County plant. The power plant was first fueled with coal, later #6 oil, and finally in the 1980s, with oil, though it could be converted from coal to #6 oil to gas though in the 1980s it was converted to gas. No longer on site, a 100,000-gallon diesel fuel storage tank was located east of power plant on Howard County.

The power plant was damaged by flooding from Agnes in 1972, as was the catwalk that had to be totally rebuilt thereafter. After operations ceased, sections of the walls were knocked out, and large sections of the roof are missing or collapsed. It appears as though any useful equipment has been removed following the cessation of power production, leaving a damaged shell of a

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building exposed to the elements.

History:

Initially a cotton textile factory, established in 1824, the Thistle Mill was the third such operation to open in the Patapsco valley in the first quarter of the 19th century, after the Union and Patapsco Manufacturing Companies. The origins of the Thistle Mill lie in the conjunction of two significant factors. First is the forced break-up of the Ellicott family domination of property interests in the valley, and second is the ready availability of alternative investment capital for industrial development. Enjoined from flour production, Alexander Fridge and William Morris sought to enter another profitable industry developing in early-19th century America, cotton textile production. Of particular importance is the growth of nearby Baltimore as a center for shipbuilding, and the growing use at this same time of domestic cotton duck cloth for sails over imported materials, usually woven from hemp. The regional development largely undertaken by the Ellicotts, and further promoted by population growth in the valley, also made additional local investments in industry attractive, as did public support for connecting roads to the turnpike system. That Alexander Fridge was later to serve on the first Board of Directors for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which was to pass by the Thistle factory on the opposite side of the river, is not a coincidence. An existing county road bridge easily linked the factory complex with the new railroad. The prosperity, indeed survival, of Baltimore and its regional industries required a reliable and efficient transportation network. Investors like Fridge made this possible.

In his not yet published dissertation draft, Henry K. Sharp's research on early Patapsco valley industrialization explains that Thistle, while seemingly a minor mill, did figure in to the very early history of the American Industrial Revolution. Sharp wrote:

"Patapsco waterpower also came to drive the machinery of yet two more cotton textile mills in this early period, the Patapsco and the Thistle, erected in 1813 and 1822 on the Union [Manufacturing Co. in Oella] model, concurrent with the first factory buildings at Waltham and at Lowell. These Maryland installations further trace the alternate branch of the American-factory-system origination story, begun by their mid-Atlantic brethren, the merchant flour mills, and improperly pruned from the tree."

The long-lived, though substantially altered, Thistle facility also demonstrates the advances and reversals of industry: the substitution of steam for waterpower as the demand for production increased, and the subsequent substitution of electric power for steam and water. Similarly, the transformation of factory production from cotton fabrics to automobile tire bands represents an attempt to abandon an enterprise no longer competitive in the contemporary market (demand for sailcloth, for example, collapsed with refinements in steam power, shifting shipping methods), and to automobiles to tap into that new and extraordinarily fast-growing industry in the 1920s. The transfer to paper products was probably the result of the consolidation of facilities for tire production, as well as the topographical limitations of space imposed by the site. The early 20th century pasteboard manufacturing, with potentially harmful environmental consequences, could more easily take place in a region less densely populated than Baltimore City, where the first onsite paper manufacturer had originally been located, though increasingly environmental concerns followed the Bartgis Company and its successors to the site. The Mill produced recycled paperboard, aka boxboard.

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The Thistle mill occupies property that members of the Ellicott family acquired in various tracts at the end of the 18th century. These parcels the second generation of Ellicotts—Jonathan (1756-1826), Elias (1759-1827), George (1760-1832), and John (1769-1820)—had resurveyed in the spring of 1802 and patented in February 1805 as Ilchester (Ann Arundel Patented Certificate 779). The Ilchester name for the mill and village derived from Joseph Holland, Earl of Ilchester.

At John Ellicott's death in 1820, court orders to dispose of his property to satisfy creditors met with limited success, except in the case of two tracts on the east side of the Patapsco River, just below Edward Gray's Patapsco Cotton Factory (Dorsey v. Ellicott, Baltimore City Circuit Court Equity Papers). For the benefit of the estate, on 27 February 1822, Thomas Ellicott (1777-1859) sold a 29.5-acre parcel next to an undeveloped mill seat—that is, a site for a mill—to Alexander Fridge and William Morris, two wealthy Baltimore businessmen (Baltimore WG 165/235). The estate's trustees then sold the adjacent 68-acre parcel containing the mill seat to Fridge and Morris on 10 September 1823 (Baltimore 169/29).

"A number of legal instruments associated with the sale...provide a clear picture of the progress of construction... Fridge and Morris began excavations for a dam and millrace that were substantially complete by September 1823. The precise site of the mill building had not yet been established, though...[there was specific instructions for] a road to be made along the river bank—connecting Ellicott lands downstream with an existing road at Gray's factory upstream...In August 1824, county examiners found this upgraded road [from the Baltimore and Fredericktown Turnpike {now called Frederick Road} to the site]...to be well executed, and described it to be leading to the Thistle Factory."

Thus the 1823 initial construction of the dam and 1824 construction of the factory building are established, as "the transfer included, 'the Mill or factory and the machinery therein.'"

The Ellicott family controlled substantial sections of the Patapsco valley's waterpower, and this property sale marked the beginning of a significant loosening of their grip on water resources and land in the valley. Nevertheless, the conveyance did not take place without restriction, and the legal instruments associated with the sale provide a clear picture of the physical environment at the time and the reciprocal obligations of the Ellicotts and the new owners. The deed for the 68-acre portion of the mill seat, recording a sale price of 9000 dollars, clearly indicates that development was planned; it included all land that "may or shall be covered with water in consequence of a dam being erected across the falls." Indeed construction was already underway, as a road for common use to be laid out across the property, was to run up the Patapsco River "keeping near the water but to be so located as not to interfere with the Mill race or canal already made by [Fridge and Morris] on the aforesaid land nor with any situations requisite for a principal building." Furthermore, the road could be continued upriver to Edward Gray's Patapsco Cotton Factory, and an additional route east was "to be made up Dyers Whim Branch to the Baltimore and Frederick Town Turnpike Road, to intersect at some convenient point near the eight milestone." The Ellicotts agreed to pay for half of the road construction and maintenance provided that "the part to be leveled and prepared for use shall be only sixteen feet wide and constituted of earth in the manner of our ordinary County roads." Fridge and Morris petitioned the Levy Court of Baltimore County the following summer for a public road to run from the turnpike to their factory, designated the Thistle mill. A note with the returned plat dated 7 August 1824, assured the court that it was a well-executed road. The route to their factory opened the following spring in 1825.

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While the Thistle mill was under construction, Alexander Fridge sold his half share in the site and improvements in 1824 to his Baltimore business partner William Morris and to George Morris of Philadelphia for $25,000 (Baltimore 172/144). The Morrises dedicated their factory to the production of cotton textiles, and according to Jared Sparks, writing in the North American Review in January 1825, the operations were "in rapid improvement." A single factory house contained 1,000 operating spindles, 100 power looms, and 100 employees. The Morrises had a warehouse at No. 2 Hanover Street in Baltimore. The General Assembly of Maryland incorporated the Thistle Manufacturing Company during the December session of 1834, and the Morrises conveyed ownership to the corporation the following year (Baltimore 260/22).

It has been assumed they began production of cotton duck. The Thistle Factory possessed a greater capacity for fabric production than the two other nearby textile mills, a circumstance that suggests that it may have been intended to supply the Baltimore shipyards with cotton duck, an important domestic alternative to imported sail cloth. With the later industrial operations at Ilchester and along Bonnie Branch, the Thistle Mill was part of a thriving factory community in the mid-19th century, surviving the financial climate Panic of 1837 and the ensuing depression.

Beyond these initial deeds, no documents yet uncovered detail the construction of the Thistle Mill village. However, only a few dwellings for laborers survive: two stories under a low-pitched gable roof, the duplex stone ones with gable end chimneys, banked into the hillside and entries on the long axis and a frame one higher on the hillside. An aerial photograph of the complex from c. 1940 in Cramm's book, shows on the north side of River Road a nine-bay stone building and at least eight stone, duplex, workers' dwellings (one still stands) along S. Hilltop Road and uphill another frame dwelling with its ridge perpendicular to the road that still survives. More houses, a school, a church, and a graveyard were located above, beyond view, as seen in historic atlas plats. Another aerial photo published in 1952, shows at least five other dwellings of apparently identical materials and configurations, in addition to a larger gable-roofed structure built into the hillside across from the entry to the former main factory building ("Bartgis"). This last was identified in 1929 as the company's general store and lunch room. The apparent consanguinity of these structures with the main factory building—also constructed of stone—suggests contemporary construction dates. Only foundation footprints and retaining walls remain visible.

Indeed, as the first large scale development at Ilchester in the 19th century, the Thistle operations would have required additional facilities to house and support laborers. Construction in stone also suggests the further influence of the Ellicott family on the project—unwritten, this time; the Ellicotts owned a granite stone quarry at Cooper's Branch, on the Frederick Road, less than two miles west of the Thistle site. In 1830, when the B & O RR was constructed, a railroad station and tiny post office were constructed on the Howard County side to accommodate the villagers and those transacting business at the cotton mill. The Ellicotts built a stone hotel and tavern on the hillside above the post office, though apparently it failed to receive adequate business.

By 1832, Fielding Lucas listed mills in Picture of Baltimore and described the Thistle factory and surrounding residences as: "The tall factory of yellow hue, with those neat buildings of stone, scattered on the hillside above it, with their gardens and shady trees, and the dashing and unquiet mill dam that casts its silver sheen before you in the sunlight, with its unceasing flickering of light and shade—all these belong to the Thistle Factory." As the company town grew, more stone dwellings were added in a

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style some likened to a Welsh village with roof eaves set low just above the second floor window lintels. Some of the buildings were added across the road from the factory while others were perched higher up the hillside.

The 1850 J.C. Sidney atlas shows the "Thistle Factory" as a cluster of four buildings with approximately a dozen structures (assumed to be mostly houses) along the north side of River Road. One of the factory buildings is shown as "T"-shaped, likely the original mill with the perpendicular wing seen later in the 1871 photo. "The 1850 census listed William and George Morris a the factory with an $80,000 investment, and 71 male and 106 female workers...[and] a water-powered output of 1.3 million yards of sheetings and drill." Robert Taylor's 1857 map also shows four factory buildings, but no additional details. "With the later industrial operations at Ilchester and along Bonnie Branch, the Thistle Mill was part of a thriving factory community in the mid-nineteenth century, surviving the financial climate Panic of 1837 and the ensuing depression."

DAM: The 1823 dam was a critical part of the manufacturing operations, supplying the waterpower to drive the mill's machinery. The owners faced challenges throughout the 19th century as water levels fluctuated, affecting the production, and storms damaged the riverfront construction. An 1857 reference explains the consequences involving the river's freeze-thaw cycles and the effects of rain, thawing, and freshet: "The dam of the Thistle Factory resisted the pressure of the large body if ice, which became so great as to make it necessary to blow up the dam with gunpowder, to save the factory from destruction." And so, the original dam was destroyed—not for the first nor last time.

Called an event that changed the course of Ellicott City history, the 24 July 1868 flood, oft referred to as 'The Great Flood', aka 'Black Friday,' raged through the Patapsco valley in the summer, causing death and destruction in its wake. "At Ilchester, The Thistle Cotton Mill, situated on a narrow soft curve in the steep valley, suffered major damage." Numerous other wood and even granite mills and houses were damaged and destroyed, and outbuildings and machinery washed down the Patapsco valley. Roads and industries were ruined or washed away, including the road bridge at Ellicott City. All railroad tracks and bridges between Watersville [near Mt. Airy] and Ilchester were washed away. Downstream from Ilchester at Orange Grove, the mills on either side of the river crumbled. "...only three buildings remained after the flood" in the "little industrial town of Avalon, " just above the Thomas Viaduct. Silt, mud, and litter settled over and around the destruction and wreckage. After the maelstrom, bodies and debris were found 15 miles downstream at the mouth of the river in Baltimore.

The Great Flood of 1868 washed away the Thistle dam, among many other structures and lives. According to a Baltimore American newspaper account less than a week after the flood, "...the Ilchester railroad bridge, portions of the railroad tracks, the factory, and mill dams and races–all are gone, with the exception of the Union and Gray's dams." It is known that Granite Cotton Mill and its dam upstream from Thistle "were swept away by the flood and never rebuilt." Those materials and others from upstream Ellicott City battered the Thistle dam.

In 1870, a water wheel shaft from the Avalon Mills, ruined by the flood, was added at Thistle. Reportedly, the shaft was purchased for pennies on the dollar at auction. (Peirce, p. 44, 52, 70)

An 1871 photo from the B&O Museum (Harwood, Ibid. p. 87) shows a rubble stone retaining wall extending east from the dam—assumed to have been rebuilt—past a discharge spillway, past the first stone building (called the Filter House during

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Simkins use), past the original mill and returning at what today is approximately the middle of the plant. A low arch in the retaining wall at river level near the end of the original mill implies the location of the discharge outlet returning the water used to power the machinery back into the river. Atop this wall was a fresh white picket fence, probably erected after the 1868 flood repairs were completed. While the retaining wall is either no longer present or at least not visible under fill, portions of the wall near the head gate may date to the construction seen in this 1871 photo.

The Catonsville Argus, 23 October 1886, reported, "Work on the factory dam at Thistle, first district, is progressing very favorable." Shortly thereafter the Baltimore County Union, February 19, 1887, reported, "In rebuilding the Thistle dam, near Ellicott City, two of the originally used sills of white oak were found to be perfectly sound and allowed to remain. They have been there for more than sixty years, not having been disturbed when the dam was rebuilt in 1852."

No specific documentation dating the current dam has been identified. Frank Ward of Johns Hopkins University listed the year of construction as 1900, but offered no explanation nor source for that date. The 20th century history of the dam is sketchy at best. John McGrain reported that in 1982, Frank Williams, now retired though formerly of Whitman-Requardt, and Associates, LLP engineers in Baltimore, stated that Mr. Ridgely, who had worked for Simkins Industries on site since 1946, indicated that the dam at Thistle was rebuilt about 1950. This information roughly parallels what Jeffrey Lester, a 30-year employee of Simkins Industries remembered hearing from Vincent Zuwallack, who came from the company headquarters in New Haven, Connecticut in 1941. Mr. Zuwallck relayed that he had put concrete over the existing wood dam. So far, no other corroborating evidence has been uncovered that the dam is log crib construction was parged with concrete in the early 1940s. The results of the core drilling did not confirm this description. The fish ladder was installed in 1997 at the western end of the dam to facilitate the passage of fish.

In 1858, tax records list the value of the mill at $80,000, where 178 workers operated 120 looms. Sachse's print from the same period shows the bell tower at the north end of the mill.

The 1877 Hopkins County Atlas of Baltimore County showed Thistle Mfg. Co./Thistle Cotton Mills. The 1877 Hopkins County Atlas of Howard County showed Thistle Cotton Mills with three buildings. It could have been that they had been joined together, counted as fewer in number than had been counted before, or that the fourth building shown earlier had been removed after the 1868 flood.

There were four more corporations formed with the name Thistle in the title. The original firm, under the presidency of William W. Spence, sold to the Thistle Mills Company in 1882.

In 1882, the Baltimore County Union reported that a new brick mill was under construction and would measure 70 x 135 feet. [This is likely the low brick building with segmental arched windows at the center of the complex.] In 1891, a new firm was organized to purchase and operate the mill under the name Thistle Mills Company of Baltimore County, with Edgar George Miller, Charles Reed Spencer, John McHenry, and Alexander Hamilton Stump Post as principals. A fire did $20,000 [worth of] damage to the dye house on 7 February 1899; the photograph in the Baltimore American of 8 February showed the main building with a small belfry on the end next to River Road, the scene still fairly rustic. The [article mentions] stockholders voted in 1899

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility Recommended: ___ **Eligibility Not Recommended:** ___

Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D **Considerations:** ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G

MHT Comments:

_____ _____

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services **Date**

_____ _____

Reviewer, National Register Program **Date**

to amend the charter to include the manufacture of silk—which had been allowed in the first incorporation of 1834. The Towson paper reported the results the following year:

The Thistle Mill Company had just completed a new building at Ilchester [low saw-tooth roof structure at east end of complex], to be used as a silk mill, which would accommodate 200 looms, and is fitted with the very delicate machinery required for the work. About 300 hands are employed. The mills have been used for years for the manufacture of cotton duck but about two weeks ago were converted to silk mills."

Just as the silk production was getting up to speed, nature again took its toll on the waterpower system. "A force of workmen are engaged in repairing a washout at Thistle dam." "In 1907, the Sun declared that Thistle made "goods that rival the silk works of France."

The Thistle company operated throughout the 19th century, buying the Ilchester Flour mill site in 1882, but went into receivership a decade later. Sometime during the silk production period (between the 1898 and 1915 G.M. Hopkins Atlases of Baltimore County), the Thistle Mills Company purchased an additional 12.5 acres parcel upstream along the north bank of the river. The company built the low, stone Silk Mill with saw-tooth roof parallel to the river c. 1899. Interestingly, the original mill itself was 13-bays long; the c. 1882 brick mill was 13-bays long; and the Silk Mill had 13 clerestories over the 26-bay structure.

W.H. Kerr leased part of the mill to produce silk c. 1890. In 1892 Thistle Mills Co. sold to William H. Kerr. "By 1900, the mill had been converted to spinning only silk by the Thistle Mills Manufacturing Company. A 1907 photo does not show much change in the appearance of the plant from the river side.

Change took place on the Howard County side of the river, however. The B&O RR realigned its tracks to straighten the line's curves that had followed the river's topography; one of their goals was to increase engine speed. There were several transfers of property – small parcels – from Thistle to the B&O, and in 1901 the B&O RR applied to a judge to resolve a dispute between the two parties regarding the use of land near the realignment. The railroad was re-routed in this area in order to straighten its windy path to accommodate the longer, heavier trains. Around 1904 the new path took the line through the Ilchester Tunnel. In the coming decades, this realignment permitted the mill owners to relocate their power production facility from the middle of the complex on Baltimore County side to the Howard County side of the river. (See section below on POWER PLANT)

In 1920, the works were taken over by Albert A. Blakeney, et al, with the intention of producing cotton duck. A detailed inventory of the Thistle Mills, Inc. holdings, including the number and types of machines, two steam boilers, three water wheels, two vehicles, as well as the contents of the Thistle Store and stables, was found in the deed. Shortly thereafter in the early 1920s, in a bid to remain competitive in a new market, the Thistle Mill owners switched product lines to weaving cotton fabric for rubber automobile tire bands. Thistle Mills of Baltimore continued to operate the factory, and in 1925, switched from water and steam power to electric motors. A fabricated substitute for cotton was found to be cheaper, and technological innovation prompted the mill to lay idle for several years.

A year before the stock market crash, the Thistle Cotton Mills divested the entirety of its operations, including the dam, store,

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

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Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D **Considerations:** ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G

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_____ _____

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services **Date**

_____ _____

Reviewer, National Register Program **Date**

mill, houses, tenements, water rights, and trademarks, to the Bartgis Brothers firm of Baltimore. The Bartgis Brothers Company incorporated, moved to Ilchester from the city, undertaking a thorough renovation of the Thistle mill facility from October 1928 to August 1929, and reopened the factory to produce pasteboard box material and finished boxes. This material was used in packing products such as food, cigarettes, soap, toothpaste, and facial tissue.

According to a 30-year employee of Simkins on site, Harry Valentine, a superintendent of the plant who started working in Thistle in the 1930s, recalled that early power had been generated by two "paddle wheels", one perpendicular and one parallel to the flow of the water. Apparently in the 1930s, the western most stone building was converted to the Filter House with sand beds installed inside. Bartgis Bros. began the changeover from steam-driven equipment to electric-powered machinery.

In 1945 a Connecticut company purchased controlling interest, and in 1957 the two companies merged formally. In 1953, it was said that this mill was Maryland's Largest Manufacturer of Folding Boxboard and Folding Cartons. During a 1963-64 labor dispute that closed the plant for almost a year, the company underwent a $1 million worth of improvements, reopening in July 1964 as the Bartgis Division of New Haven Board and Carton Co.

Paper manufacturing operations consisted of pulping and refining paper fiber from newspapers and other post-consumer paper to the desired consistency, then dewatering and pressing the fibers into sheets that were then dried, finished, rolled, stored and shipped. Prior to 1971, when the facility connected to the municipal sewage interceptor, wastewater from the facility was discharged to the river. Printing operations were present from 1919 to 1964 in the Silk Mill building. According to Jeff Lester, the box cutter machine Bartgis Bros. brought to Ilchester continued in use through the Simkins era and the 105" wide cutter was installed in the 1940s, when the roof was removed and the Board Mill structure rebuilt. The huge paperboard machine was installed in 1941-1942, and required an additional boiler plant and more power. A larger transformer sub-station was installed to provide power from outside sources. Baltimore Magazine reported in 1948 that Bartgis Bros. Company, acquired by New Haven Pulp & Board Company in 1945, had recently completed boiler improvements, along with a general plant expansion. The company had changed from privately generated to purchased power, had greatly improved their water system, and employed 600 workers. By 1953, though the workforce had remained at the 600-employee level, business had tripled since the end of World War II.

From WWII on, production increased at a steady pace, with technological improvements keeping pace with demand. Buildings were filled into open spaces as need, and renovations followed both fires and technological upgrading, e.g. entire roof of c. 1882 brick building was removed and replaced, and steel framework installed to accommodate very large machinery and crane needed to move it around. In 1952, power plant consumed 100 tons of coal per day. Steam produced on Howard County side was used both in production and in heating the plant. Plant was producing 135 tons of paperboard [layered cardboard] per day.

The New Haven Board and Carton Company purchased the mill in 1957, continuing to manufacture cardboard. "At the time the plant was purchased it has two pasteboard machines, 500 employees, and an annual output of 40,000 tons of light cardboard products." Its raw products were recycled paper that was processed into cardboard. A small parcel of land was acquired in 1959.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

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Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services **Date**

_____ _____

Reviewer, National Register Program **Date**

Founded in 1901 as The New Haven Pulp and Board Company, and later taken over by Samuel Simkins who immigrated to Philadelphia in 1893, Simkins Industries was one of few companies in the United States to pioneer the manufacturing of folding cartons. In 1963 Leon Simkins became president of the company, and later that year when it was announced the New Haven Pulp and Board Company was closing, Mr. Simkins took over control, later changing the company name. Simkins Industries, headquartered in New Haven, Connecticut, established manufacturing operations in multiple locations under the second-generation leadership of Leon Simkins. Simkins Industries remains a mid-sized, family-owned company and leading manufacturer of folding cartons and specialty papers. (Simkins Industries website)

Simkins Industries produced materials from recycled paper on site for 40 years, through several fires and floods, including the enormous devastation from the flooding after Hurricane Agnes in June 1972, until 2003 when the plant succumbed to a devastating fire. In 1972, the water in the river rose over 40 feet, knocking out the first catwalk across the river. Not only did the plant sustain flood damage estimated at $1 million, disabling the plant and leveling the land along the riverbanks, but also a four-alarm fire further damaged it on the 29th of November. "The plant was rebuilt in the gutted stone shells, and expanded along both river banks.

Hurricane Agnes in the summer of 1972 was the factory's next major disaster. Much damage was sustained: The lower level of the print shop was filled with silt; the catwalk across the river was knocked down; and the power plant was severely damaged, among other flood casualties.

In 1980s the Sierra Club filed suit against Simkins Industries under the Clean Water Act. Simkins was already filtering the water prior to using it and extracting any residual fibers prior to its release into the river. Maryland Department of the Environment then required Simkins to adjust the pH of the water prior to returning it to the river. In other words, the water was cleaner and better pH balanced when returned than when it was diverted from the river through the millrace for use in manufacturing.

In its hey-day, dozens of tractor-trailer trucks rumbled through the valley transporting recycled wastepaper. Howard County paper recycling came to this factory under a government contract over a decade, ending in the late 1980s. Apparently the water tower that provided pressure collapsed in the late 1980s. Shortly thereafter, Simkins implemented a pumping station system.

In 1991, the 110 Simkins employees processed wastepaper into boxboard. During peak production near the end of Simkins' use, production ran 24 hours a day, and the factory produced 220-250 tons of recycled paper products each day. The factory had to be thoroughly cleaned once a month to reduce dust levels. The driers operated at 180 degrees, and fires from sparks igniting the dust build-up in the buildings were fairly common. The plant had a sprinkler system, and a water reservoir for factory fire suppression was located at a higher elevation near the former landfill. Lesser blazes occurred in 1976 and 1980. Following a massive fire on 23 June 2003, Simkins Industries vacated the site. According to Jeffrey Lester, this reservoir's supply was not triggered as the electronic controls melted down before they could start the sprinkler system, and the diesel backup had not been manually prompted.

Riverfront manufacturing of folding boxboard and folding cartons used in packaging from wastepaper ceased in 2003 after the fire severely damaged the plant. At that time, Simkins Industries was one of the top ten out of about 300 companies supplying the

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

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Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services **Date**

_____ _____

Reviewer, National Register Program **Date**

food industry's voracious appetite for paperboard packaging. Since 2003, Simkins Industries, Inc. has been decommissioning the property by removing the 100,000 gallon above-ground storage tank (AST), paper manufacturing equipment, two transformers, and razing several of the last old mill residences on the property.

Assessment:

Criterion A: Thistle Mill is clearly associated with significant trends and events in early commercial and industrial history. The property is historically significant, but it has been profoundly altered over time and is deteriorated to such an extent that it does not represent the trends and events that make it significant. The property lacks historic integrity and is not eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A. The concrete dam is not individually associated with any significant trends or events in history, and it is not individually eligible for listing in the National Register.

Criterion B: Thistle Mill may be associated with individuals who made significant contributions to industrial history or local history. However, the property lacks historic integrity and would no longer illustrate any such associations. The property as a whole is not eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion B. The concrete dam is not individually associated with any people who made significant contributions to history.

Criterion C: Thistle Mill is a very early example of a large-scale industrial facility, and its nineteenth-century design and construction are clearly of historic significance. However, the nineteenth century buildings and structures have been so altered and deteriorated that the property lacks sufficient historic integrity to be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C. The concrete dam does not embody the distinctive characteristics of any type, period, or method of construction and is not individually eligible.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

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MHT Comments:

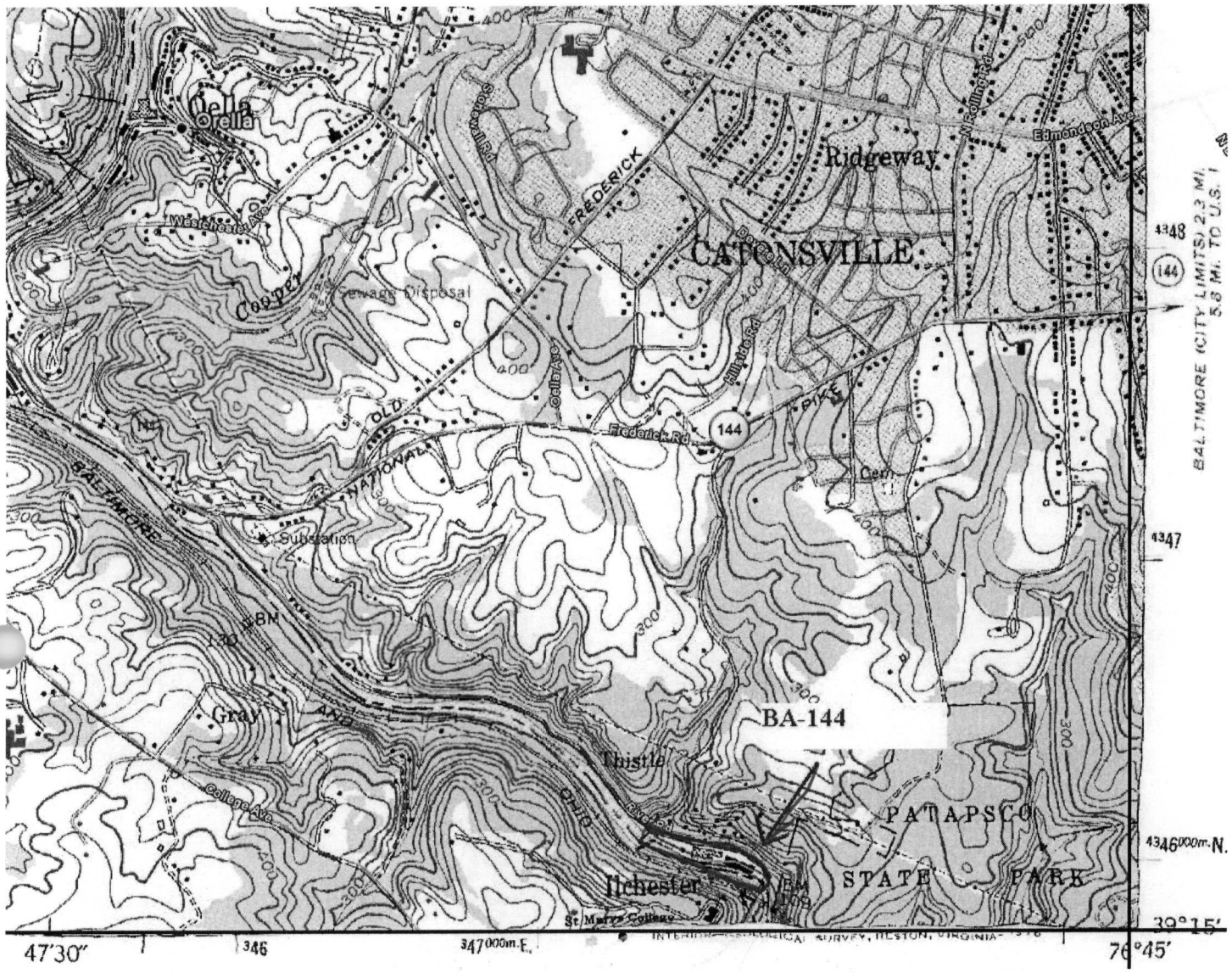
_____ _____

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services **Date**

_____ _____

Reviewer, National Register Program **Date**

BA-144
Ilchester Mills (Thistle Factory)



Ellicott City Quad

BA-144

Thistle Mill / Stockbridge

View from above (over River Road)
from S. Hilltop Road looking east
toward Ilchester bridge

roof of Silk mill / Print shop

L Wingate 9/09

1/23

BA-144

Thistle Mill / Simkins
Ilchester - Catonsville

View looking west across rooftops
of Simkins in narrow river valley
View from S Hilltop Rd over River Rd
Original mill is last building seen at night
Saw tooth roof of Silk Mill / Print Shop at left

L Wingate 9/09

2/23

Thistle Mill/Sim Kilns BA-144
Ilchester - Catonsville

Dam w/ fish ladder on Howard County side
c. 1997

L Wingate 1709

3/23

This the Mill Simkins BA-144
Ilchester - Catonsville

North end - Baltimore County side of dam
Sewer pipe in foreground

L Wingate 9/09

4/23

Thistle Mill / Sinclairs BA-144
Catonsville

North End - Baltimore County side of dam
Layered stone retaining wall forms side
of millrace beyond

L Wingate 9/09 5/23

Thistle Mill / Simkins BA-144
Catonsville

Stone retaining wall for millrace

Concrete slot for former undershot wheel
at center

overflow spillway at right

water flows over sewer pipe and back into river

L Wingate 9/09 4/23

Thistle Mill / Simkins

BA-144

Catonsville

Water from mill race flows over spillway and then over sewer pipe at left back into river

Patapsco Rv

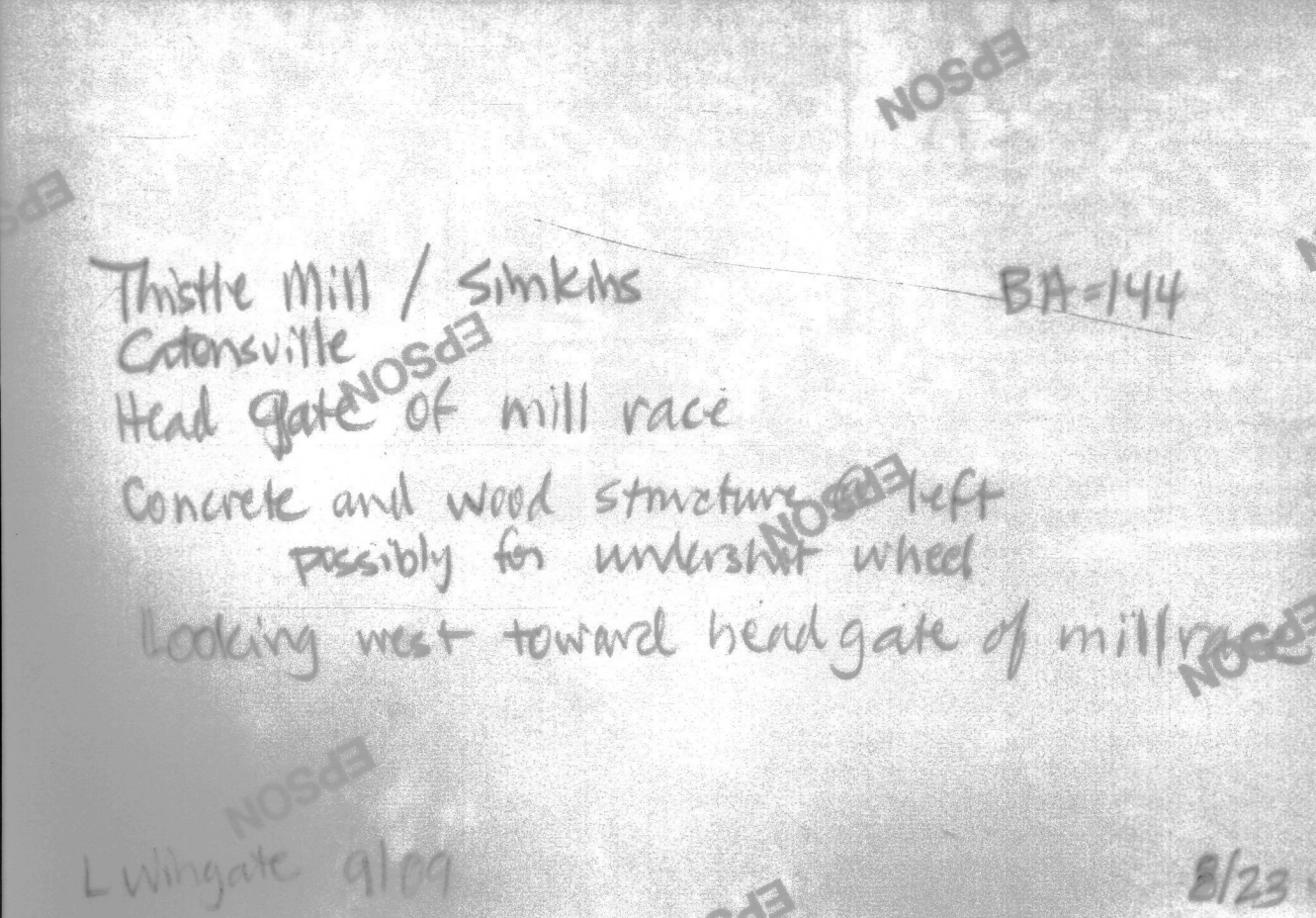
L Wingate 9/09

7/23

Thistle Mill / Simkins
Catonsville
Head gate of mill race

BA-144

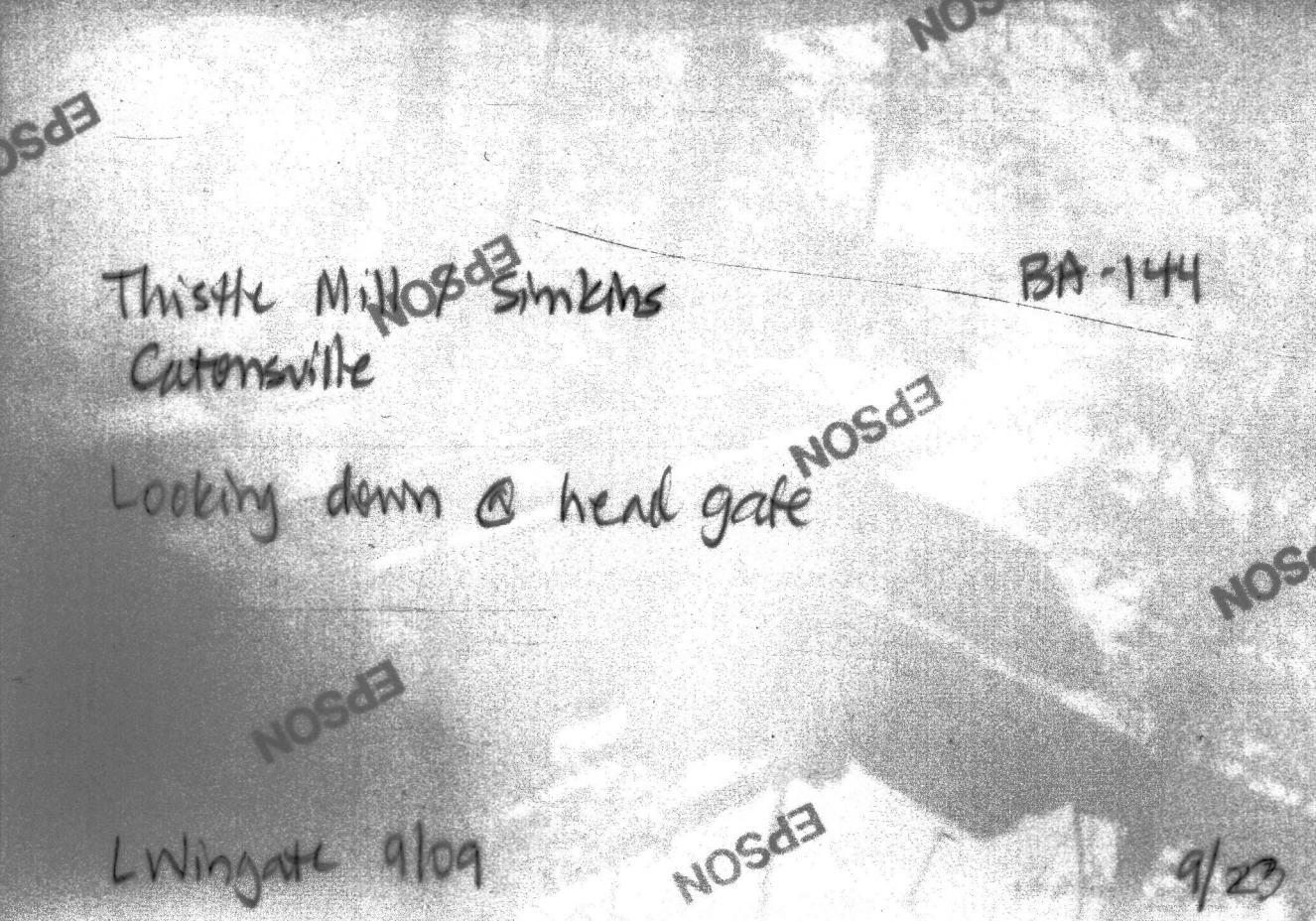
Concrete and wood structure left
possibly for undershot wheel



Looking west toward headgate of mill race

L Wingate 9/09

8/23


Thistle Mill Simkins
Catonsville
BA-144
Looking down @ head gate
L Wingate 9/09
9/23

Thistle Mill / Simkins
Catonsville

BA-144

Head gate mechanism

L Wingate 9/09

10/23

Thistle Mill / Simkins

BA-144

Catonsville

Looking east through head gate to mill race

L Wingate

11/23

Thistle Mill | Simkins

BA-144

Carmoyle

Concrete abutment for headgate dam and fish ladder beyond

L Withgate 9/09

12/23

Thistle Mill / Simkins
Catonsville

BA-144

Looking across head gate at stone retaining wall near dam

L. Wingate 9/07

13/23

Thistle / Simkins

Jodhester Catonsville

BA 144

Concrete wall down center of mill race

Stilling Pond portion of mill race

NW corner of Filter House @ right

At left, Western addition to original mill

East end of millrace

L Wingate 9/09

14/23

BA-144

This is Mill / Simkins
Catonsville

Back of bldg banked into hillside
Mill race at left with
Stilling pond section of mill race in front of concrete wall
Base of water tower in foreground

L Wingate 9/09

15/23

Thistle Mill / Simkins
Catonsville

BA-144

base of water tower in foreground
Western addition to original mill - west wall

L Wingate 9/09

16/23

Thistle Mill / Simkins
Cotonsville

BA-144

Base of original mill
opening into lowest level

L Wingate 9/09

17/23

Thistle / Simkins
Catonsville

BA-144

c1882

SE corner inside brick Board Mill

L Wingate 9/09

19/23


5-5

Thistle Mill / Simkins
Catonsville

BA-144

Looking west within factory complex

L Wingate 9/09

18/23

Thistle / Simkins
Ilchester Castle Cottonville

BA-144

c 1882 brick
Looking west inside board mill
End wall = east wall of original Thistle mill
Not much left of original bldg:
left front brick wall
2nd floor joist stubs at right

L Wingate 9/09

20/23

Thistle Mill & Sim Kilns BA-144

Catonsville

SW corner of birch Board Mill c.1902

troughs in floor to recirculate water from paper board production

Stone wall @ right end is east wall of original Thistle Mill building

L Wingate 9/09

21/23

Thistle / simkins
Ilchester Catonsville

BA-144

Silk Mill - southwest corner
L Wingate 9/09

Land at night is fill to ~~prank~~ access
Saw tooth roof line
Two different color stonework
Modern infill @ left replaced power plant

22 / 23

Thistle / Simkins
Ilchester Catonsville

Power plant on Howard County side of Patapsco River.
Note substantial granite base
Catwalk and pipe across river
Exposed sewer pipe at left follows Baltimore Co. river bank

L Wingate

23/23

BA-144

Form 10-300
(Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

N. R. FIELD SHEET

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

MD. HISTORICAL TRUST
BOX 1704
ANNAPOLIS, MD. 21404

(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)

STATE: Maryland
COUNTY: Balto. Co.
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY NUMBER | DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Thistle Factory

AND/OR HISTORIC: Ilchester Mills

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Thistle Road

CITY OR TOWN: Ilchester

STATE: Md. | CODE | COUNTY: Baltimore Co. | CODE

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District ☐ Building ☒	Public ☐	Public Acquisition:	Occupied ☒	Yes:
Site ☐ Structure ☐	Private ☒	In Process ☐	Unoccupied ☐	Restricted ☐
Object ☐	Both ☐	Being Considered ☐	Preservation work in progress ☐	Unrestricted ☐
				No: ☒

PRESENT USE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Agricultural	☐	Government	☐	Park	☐	Transportation	☐
Commercial	☐	Industrial	☒	Private Residence	☐	Other *(Specify)*	☐
Educational	☐	Military	☐	Religious	☐		
Entertainment	☐	Museum	☐	Scientific	☐		

Comments ☐

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME: New Haven Board and Carton Co. Inc (Simpkins Industries)

STREET AND NUMBER: River Road

CITY OR TOWN: Catonsville | STATE: Md. 21228 | CODE

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: B.C. Land Records, Liber3269, f. 379; Parcel ___, Map 100. Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER: Washington Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Towson, ~~Md.~~ | STATE: Md. 21204 | CODE

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local ☐

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: | STATE: | CODE

STATE: | COUNTY: | FOR NPS USE ONLY | ENTRY NUMBER | DATE

BA-144

N. R. FIELD SHEET

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One) Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☒ Deteriorated ☐ Ruins ☐ Unexposed ☐	
INTEGRITY	(Check One) Altered ☒ Unaltered ☐	(Check One) Moved ☐ Original Site ☒

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL *(if known)* PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This 20th Century papermaking complex includes a number of 19th Century outbuildings, plus a street of workers' houses described as resembling a Welsh village. The stone pump house is a two-story stone building of 19th Century origin with its windows blocked up, but otherwise sturdy

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

BA-144

N. R. FIELD SHEET

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Pre-Columbian ☐	16th Century ☐	18th Century ☐	20th Century ☐
15th Century ☐	17th Century ☐	19th Century ☒	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) *(If Applicable and Known)*

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Aboriginal	Education ☐	Political ☐	Urban Planning ☐
Prehistoric ☐	Engineering ☐	Religion/Philosophy ☐	Other *(Specify)* ☐
Historic ☐	Industry ☒	Science ☐	
Agriculture ☐	Invention ☐	Sculpture ☐	
Art ☐	Landscape Architecture ☐	Social/Humanitarian ☐	
Commerce ☐	Literature ☐	Theater ☐	
Communications ☐	Military ☐	Transportation ☐	
Conservation ☐	Music ☐		

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)*

Thistle forms a picturesque company town with solid dwellings and odd stone buildings that have survived modernization of the main plant. It is set in a narrow gorge in the river near bridges and railroad tunnels.

The Thistle Factory began as the cotton print mill established by two brothers from Scotland, George and William Morris, in 1837, on a 106-acre tract in the Patapsco valley. Silk and cotton were produced plus silk yarn and cotton thread. In 1919 the works was taken over by Edward and A.A. Blakeney and Co. to make cotton duck but was soon sold to a New York firm for making tire fabric. In 1922, Bartgis Brothers, a Baltimore printing and box making company, acquired the plant and continued making paperboard in the former textile plant; Bartgis Brothers was acquired by E.H. Lupton. In 1957, the works was acquired by New Haven Board and Carton Company which had output or 40,000 tons/annum. The village post office was 8 x 10 feet and was claimed to be the State's smallest. A dam just above the plant traps water for the mill which passes through the antique pump house.

In 1970 the plant under title of Simpkins Industries was enjoined to stop pollution of the river with Titanium Dioxide and connect with the sewer system, Sun, June 8, 1971.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

BA-144

N. R. FIELD SHEET

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"The Bartgis Brothers Co.," Baltimore, March 1952.

"Progress Versus Prosperity, A Howard County Beginning," Robert G. Breen, Sun, March 25, 1953

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY						OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE					
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE				LATITUDE			LONGITUDE	
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"		°	'	"	°	'	"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"							
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"							
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"							

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
John McGrain

ORGANIZATION
Baltimore County Historical Society

DATE
Sept. 5, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:
9811 Van Buren Lane

CITY OR TOWN:
Cockeysville

STATE
Md. 21030

CODE

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

_____
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

_____
Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

This document updates the existing Inventory form; a new statement of significance is offered.

Significance:

The Thistle factory is one of only two mills still operating in the Patapsco valley, and is the only one in which portions of the original building survive. Alexander Fridge and William Morris, two Baltimore businessmen, bought the site for the Thistle factory from the Ellicott family in 1823. The Ellicotts had been compelled to sell some of their vast holdings along the Patapsco to settle debts, though they retained enough control to stipulate that Fridge and Morris not build a flour mill on the site. The two investors concurred, and began construction of a cotton textile mill the next year. This was the third such facility in the Patapsco Valley, and it began operations in 1825. Fridge withdrew from the partnership while the Thistle mill was under construction, and sold his half share to George Morris of Philadelphia. The Thistle Manufacturing Company was incorporated by the General Assembly in 1834, though the name is documented in a road survey to the factory a decade

earlier. The Thistle Factory possessed a greater capacity for fabric production than the two other nearby textile mills, a circumstance which suggests that it may have been intended to supply the Baltimore shipyards with cotton duck, then just proving to be an important domestic alternative to imported sail cloth. Further research here may be enlightening.

With the later industrial operations at Ilchester and along Bonnie Branch, the Thistle Mill was part of a thriving factory community in the mid-nineteenth century. Of three large mills, however, the Thistle alone survived into the twentieth century, and at that only after falling into receivership in the early 1890s. The Thistle changed production to weave automobile tire bands in the early 1920s, though consolidations in that growing industry probably put the mill out of business; it was sold to a Baltimore pasteboard box manufacturer, the Bartgis Brothers, in 1928. Bartgis operated through the Depression, and sold the facility in 1957 to another cardboard manufacturer. It is now the site of Simpkins Industries, producing materials from recycled paper.

Inventory Number BA-144
Thistle Manufacturing Company, Baltimore County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area

Maryland Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Plan
Statewide Historic Contexts

Geographic Organization:

Piedmont

Chronological Development/Periods:

10) Agricultural-Industrial Transition A.D. 1815-1870
11) Industrial/Urban Dominance A.D. 1870-1930

Historic Period Themes:

2) Community Planning
3) Economic
8) Transportation

Resource Type:

Category: Site (Buildings and Ruins)

Historic Environment: Village

Historic Functions and Uses: Cotton Mill, Residences, ancillary structures.

Known Design Sources: None

Inventory Number BA-144
Thistle Manufacturing Company, Baltimore County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area

Statement of Significance, Updated.
8.1

The Thistle factory is one of only two mills still operating in the Patapsco valley, and is the only one in which portions of the original building survive. Originally a cotton textile factory, established in 1824, the Thistle mill was the third such operation to open in the Patapsco valley in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, after the Union and Patapsco Manufacturing Companies. The origins of the Thistle mill lie in the conjunction of two significant factors. First is the forced break-up of the Ellicott family domination of property interests in the valley, and second is the ready availability of alternative investment capital for industrial development. Enjoined from flour production, Alexander Fridge and William Morris sought to enter another profitable industry developing in early-nineteenth century America, cotton textile production. Of particular importance is the growth of Baltimore as a center for ship building, and the growing use at this same time of domestic cotton duck cloth for sails over imported materials, usually woven from hemp. The regional development largely undertaken by the Ellicotts, and further promoted by population growth in the valley, also made additional local investments in industry attractive, as did public support for connecting roads to the turnpike system. That Alexander Fridge was later to serve on the first Board of Directors for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which was to pass by the Thistle factory on the opposite side of the river, is not a coincidence; an existing county road bridge easily linked the factory complex with the new railroad (Dilts, p. 406). The prosperity, indeed survival, of Baltimore and its regional industries required a reliable and efficient transportation network. Investors like Fridge made this possible.

The long-lived, though substantially altered, Thistle facility also demonstrates the advances and reversals of industry: the substitution of steam for water power, and the subsequent substitution of electric power for steam and water. Similarly the transformation of factory production from cotton fabrics to automobile tire bands represents an attempt to abandon an enterprise no longer competitive in the contemporary market (demand for sailcloth, for example, collapsed with refinements in steam power), and to tap into a new and extraordinarily fast-growing industry in the 1920s, automobiles. The transfer to paper products was probably the result of the consolidation of facilities for tire production, as well as the natural limitations of space imposed by the site. Pasteboard operations with potentially harmful environmental consequences could more easily take place in a region less densely populated than Baltimore

City, where the paper manufacturer had originally been located, though increasingly environmental concerns followed the Bartgis Company and its successors to the site (McGrain, *Molinography*, and Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Room, Vertical File, Patapsco River). Recycled paperboard is now the product of the mill.

The Thistle mill occupies land which members of the Ellicott family acquired in various tracts at the end of the eighteenth century. These parcels the second generation of Ellicotts--Jonathan (1756-1826), Elias (1759-1827), George (1760-1832), and John (1769-1820)--had resurveyed in the spring of 1802 and patented in February 1805 as Ilchester (Ann Arundel Patented Certificate 779). At John Ellicott's death in 1820, court orders to dispose of his property to satisfy creditors met with limited success, except in the case of two tracts on the east side of the Patapsco River, just below Edward Gray's Patapsco Cotton Factory (Dorsey v. Ellicott, Baltimore City Circuit Court Equity Papers). For the benefit of the estate, Thomas Ellicott (1777-1859) sold on 27 February 1822 a 29.5-acre parcel next to an undeveloped mill seat--that is, a site for a mill--to Alexander Fridge and William Morris, two wealthy Baltimore businessmen (Baltimore WG 165/235). The estate's trustees then sold the adjacent 68-acre parcel containing the mill seat to Fridge and Morris on 10 September, 1823 (Baltimore 169/29).

The Ellicott family controlled substantial sections of the Patapsco valley's water power, and this property sale marked the beginning of a significant loosening of their grip on water resources and land in the valley. Nevertheless, the conveyance did not take place without restriction, and the legal instruments associated with the sale provide a clear picture of the physical environment at the time and the reciprocal obligations of the Ellicotts and the new owners. The deed for the 68-acre portion of the mill seat, recording a sale price of 9000 dollars, clearly indicates that development was planned; it included all land that "may or shall be covered with water in consequence of a dam being erected across the falls." Indeed construction was already underway, as a road for common use to be laid out across the property, was to run up the Patapsco river "keeping near the water but to be so located as not to interfere with the Mill race or canal already made by [Fridge and Morris] on the aforesaid land nor with any situations requisite for a principal building." Furthermore, the road could be

continued upriver to Edward Gray's Patapsco Cotton Factory, and an additional route east was "to be made up Dyers Whim Branch to the Baltimore and Frederick Town Turnpike Road, to intersect at some convenient point near the eight milestone." The Ellicotts agreed to pay for half of the road construction and maintenance provided that "the part to be leveled and prepared for use shall be only sixteen feet wide and constituted of earth in the manner of our ordinary County roads." Fridge and Morris petitioned the Levy Court of Baltimore County the following summer for a public road to run from the turnpike to their factory, designated the Thistle mill. A note with the returned plat dated 7 August 1824, assured the court that "it is a well executed Road, and in better Condition for traveling than any common County Road with which we are acquainted" (Fridge/Morris petition, Baltimore County Court, Land Commission Papers). The route to their factory opened the following spring, in 1825 (*Baltimore American*, 30 November 1824).

The Ellicotts also sought to ensure their own regional dominance in the flour trade, and carefully specified in the deed of sale that the mill Fridge and Morris were to open could "not be applied to or for the purposes of grinding wheat, rye or indian corn, unless the grain so to be ground shall be purchased in the City of Baltimore, but may be applied to any other uses or purposes whatsoever. . . ." The Ellicott family also stipulated that if it sought to develop the next lower mill seat in Ann Arundel County, the site of the old Dismal Mill, that the same restrictions would be in force. Fridge and Morris likewise sought assurances from the Ellicotts that should another adjacent parcel in Baltimore County be developed, only a factory "for the manufacture of gunpowder and the necessary" workers' housing would be constructed. In addition, "no house, store, or shop for the retailing of spiritous Liquors shall at any time be erected on said last mentioned parcel of land." No powder factory is known to have been built on the site.

Alexander Fridge sold his half share in the site and improvements in the late summer of 1824 to his Baltimore business partner William Morris and to George Morris of Philadelphia for 25,000 dollars (Baltimore 172/144). The Morrises dedicated their factory to the production of cotton textiles, and according to Jared Sparks, writing in the *North American Review* in January 1825, the operations were "in rapid improvement." A single factory house contained 1000 operating spindles, 100 power looms, and 100 employees (Sparks, 128). The

Inventory Number BA-144
Thistle Manufacturing Company, Baltimore County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area

Statement of Significance, Updated.
8.4

General Assembly of Maryland incorporated the Thistle Manufacturing Company during the December session of 1834, and the Morrises conveyed ownership to the corporation the following year (Baltimore 260/22).

Beyond these initial deeds, no documents yet uncovered detail the construction of the Thistle Mill village. However, two stone double dwellings for laborers, each with two stories under a low-pitched gable roof, gable end chimneys, and entries on the long axis survive. An aerial photograph of the complex, published in 1952, shows at least five other dwellings of apparently identical materials and configurations, in addition to a larger gable-roofed structure built into the hillside across from the entry to the former main factory building ("Bartgis"). This last was identified in 1929 as the company's general store and lunch room ("Old Thistle," p. 40). The apparent consanguinity of these structures with the main factory building--also constructed of stone--suggests contemporary construction dates. Indeed, as the first development at Ilchester in the nineteenth century, the Thistle operations would likely also have required additional facilities to house and support laborers. Construction in stone also suggests the further influence of the Ellicott family on the project--unwritten, this time; the Ellicotts owned a granite stone quarry at Cooper's Branch, on the Frederick Road, less than two miles west of the Thistle site.

The Thistle company operated throughout the nineteenth century, buying the Ilchester Flour mill site in 1882, but went into receivership a decade later (Howard 44/650; and 58/203). Thistle Mills of Baltimore continued to operate the factory, and in 1925, switched from water and steam power to electric motors (*Power Pictorial* [of the Consolidated Gas, Electric Light, and Power Company of Baltimore] 1 (1925) 5: 22). In a bid to remain competitive in a new market, the Thistle mill switched product lines to the weaving of automobile tire bands in the early 1920s (Bond, p. 81). Nevertheless, a year before the stock market crash, the Thistle Cotton Mills divested the entirety of its operations, including the dam, store, mill, houses, tenements, water rights, and trademarks, to the Bartgis Brothers firm of Baltimore (Howard 134/515). Bartgis moved from the city, undertaking a thorough renovation of the facility from October 1928 to August 1929, and reopened the factory to produce pasteboard box material and finished boxes ("Old Thistle," p. 40). The New Haven Board and Carton Company purchased the mill in 1957, and it is now the site of Simpkins Industries, producing materials from recycled paper.

Inventory Number BA-144
Thistle Manufacturing Company, Baltimore County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area

Bibliographic References, Updated.
9.1

Deeds as indicated in the text.

Baltimore County Patented Certificate 245, 14 July 1796 [warrant for resurvey issued in 1794], "Addition to the Quarry," granted to Benjamin Ellicott (1761-1838), Maryland State Archives.

"Bartgis Brothers Co., The " *Baltimore Magazine*, (March 1952). [Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Department, Vertical File, Bartgis]

Bond, Allen K. *Guide to Baltimore and Environs* (Baltimore: The Norman Remington Company) 1926, p. 81.

Dilts, James D. *The Great Road: the Building of the Baltimore and Ohio, the Nation's First Railroad, 1828-1853*. Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1993.

Dorsey v. Ellicott, Baltimore City Circuit Court Equity Papers, Maryland State Archives, Special Collections, MSA C186-3, MdHR 40,191-2-1/10, loc 3/3/14/21.

Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Room, Vertical File, Patapsco River.

"Mr. Fridge, Mr. Morris . . . Petition to lay out a road from Thistle Factory to Baltimore and Frederick town turnpike," 5 August 1823; Baltimore County Court, Land Commission Papers, Plat; Maryland State Archives, MSA C 349-11; MdHR 1-112-1/2; loc. 2/16/7/25.

McGrain, John W. *Molinography in Maryland Series*, Baltimore County notebook. Maryland State Archives, Special Collections, MSA SC 4300, loc 02/04/14.

"Old Thistle Mills Awake With a New Line." *Baltimore Magazine*, (September 1929): 40. [Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Department, Vertical File, Bartgis]

Inventory Number BA-144
Thistle Manufacturing Company, Baltimore County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area

Bibliographic References, Updated.
9.2

Power Pictorial [of the Consolidated Gas, Electric Light, and Power Company of Baltimore] 1 (1925) 5: 22

Sparks, Jared. *North American Review* 20 (Jan 1825): 128.

Varle, Charles. *A Complete View of Baltimore*, (Baltimore: Samuel Young) 1833, pp. 100, 112.

Weems, John C., advertisement, *Baltimore American*, 30 November 1824, col. 15.

Inventory Number BA-144
Thistle Manufacturing Company, Baltimore County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area

Preparation of updated Significance, Bibliography, and Images.
11.1

By:
Henry K. Sharp
(no organizational affiliation)
100 South Street West
Charlottesville, VA
22902

804/295-0140

30 October 1998

Inventory Number BA-144
Thistle Manufacturing Company, Baltimore County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area

Updated Archive Images .1

"Bartgis Brothers Co., The " *Baltimore Magazine*, (March 1952). [Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Department, Vertical File, Bartgis]

ne Bartgis Brothers Co.

LTIMORE MARCH 1952

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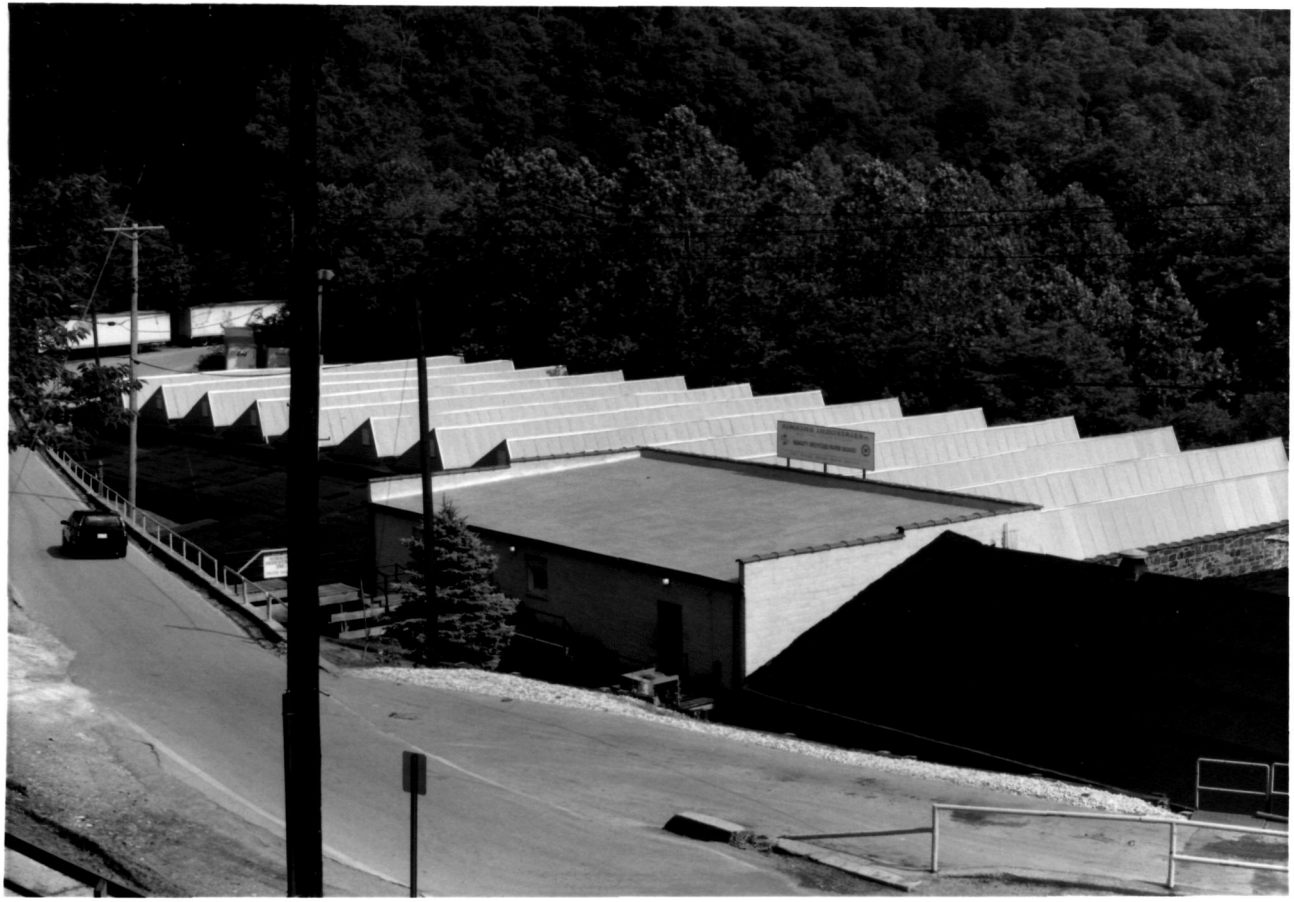
SITE — This aerial photograph shows the picturesque setting of the Bartgis Brothers Company plant on the banks of Patapsco River near Ilchester.

more into a large building formerly used by the E. J. Eichman Manufacturing Company. Here 80-horsepower electric motors replaced the gas engine which had driven the complicated system of shafting and belts at their old location.

Business grew rapidly in the new plant, and it soon became evident that the company could better serve its

approximately ten miles west of Baltimore City. The site comprised 106 acres along the Patapsco River in both Baltimore and Howard counties.

The stone wing of the Mill buildings, standing on the north bank on the river, had been erected in 1837 by two Philadelphians, natives of Scotland, George and William Mor-



BA 144
THISTLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY
BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND
HENRY K. SHARP
JUNE 1999
MARYLAND SHPO
VIEW SOUTHEAST
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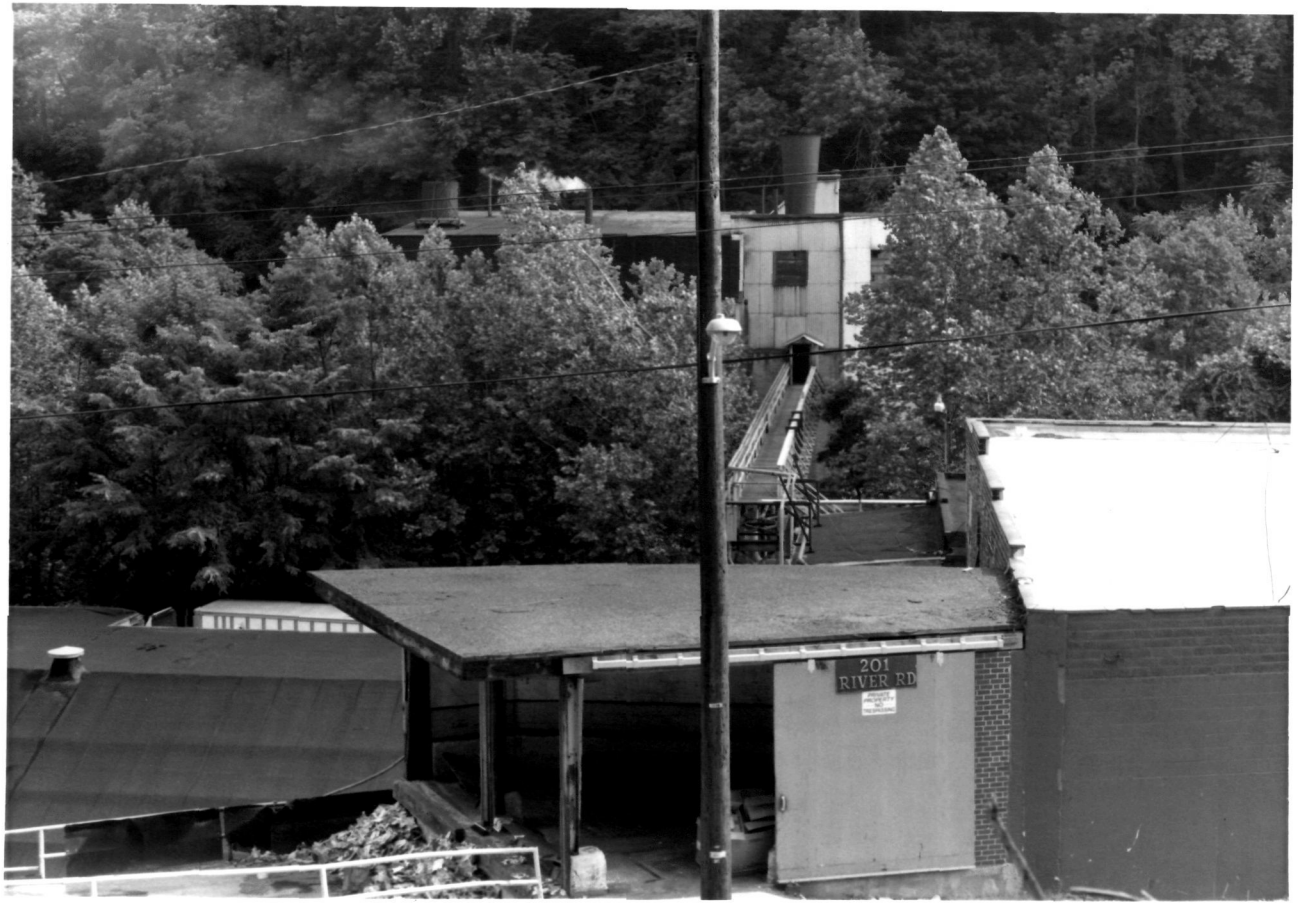
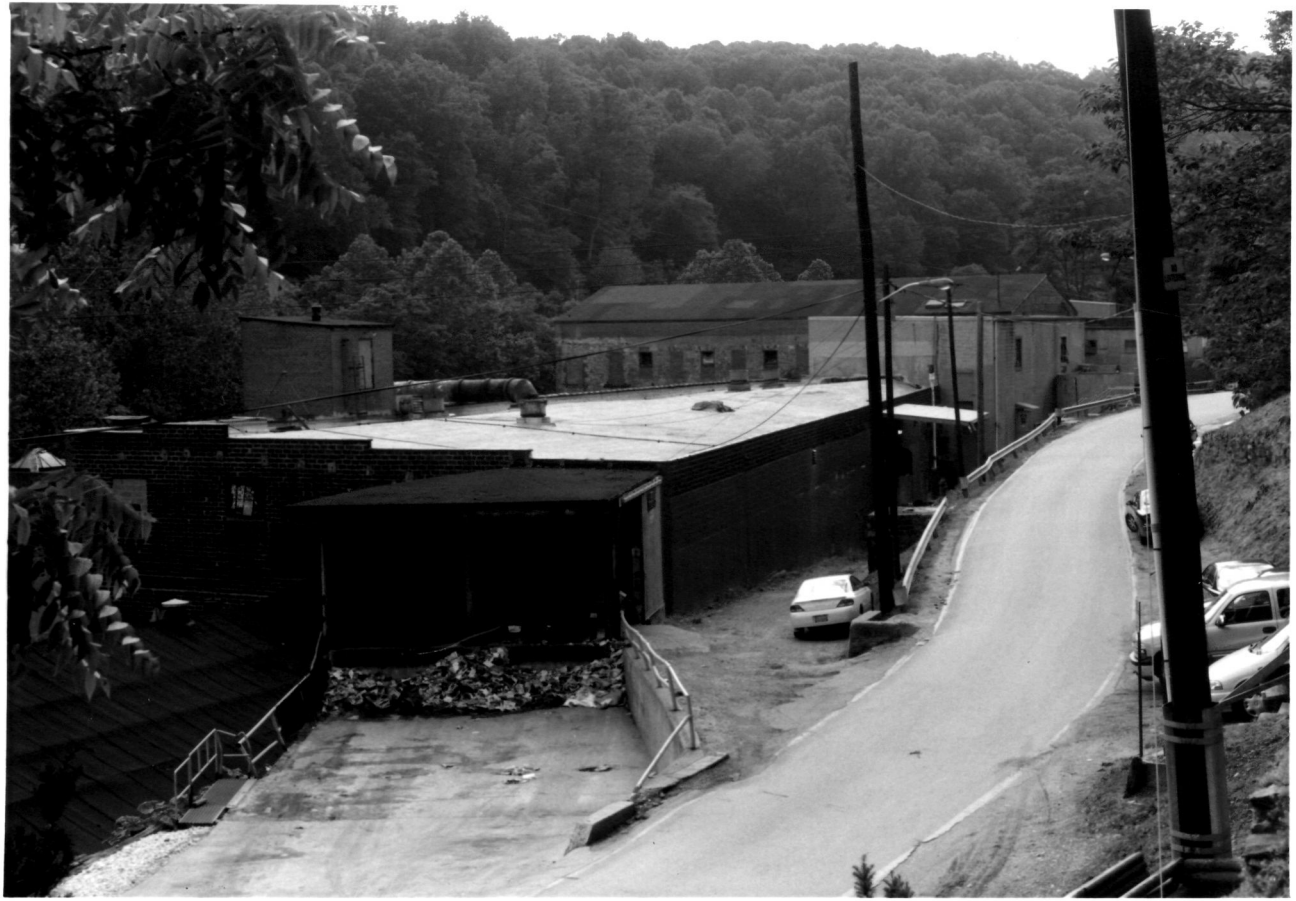

201
RIVER RD

BA 144
THISTLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY
BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND
HENRY K. SHARP
JUNE 1999
MARYLAND SHPO
VIEW SOUTH
2/5



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THISTLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY
BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND
HENRY K. SHARP
JUNE 1999
MARYLAND SHPO
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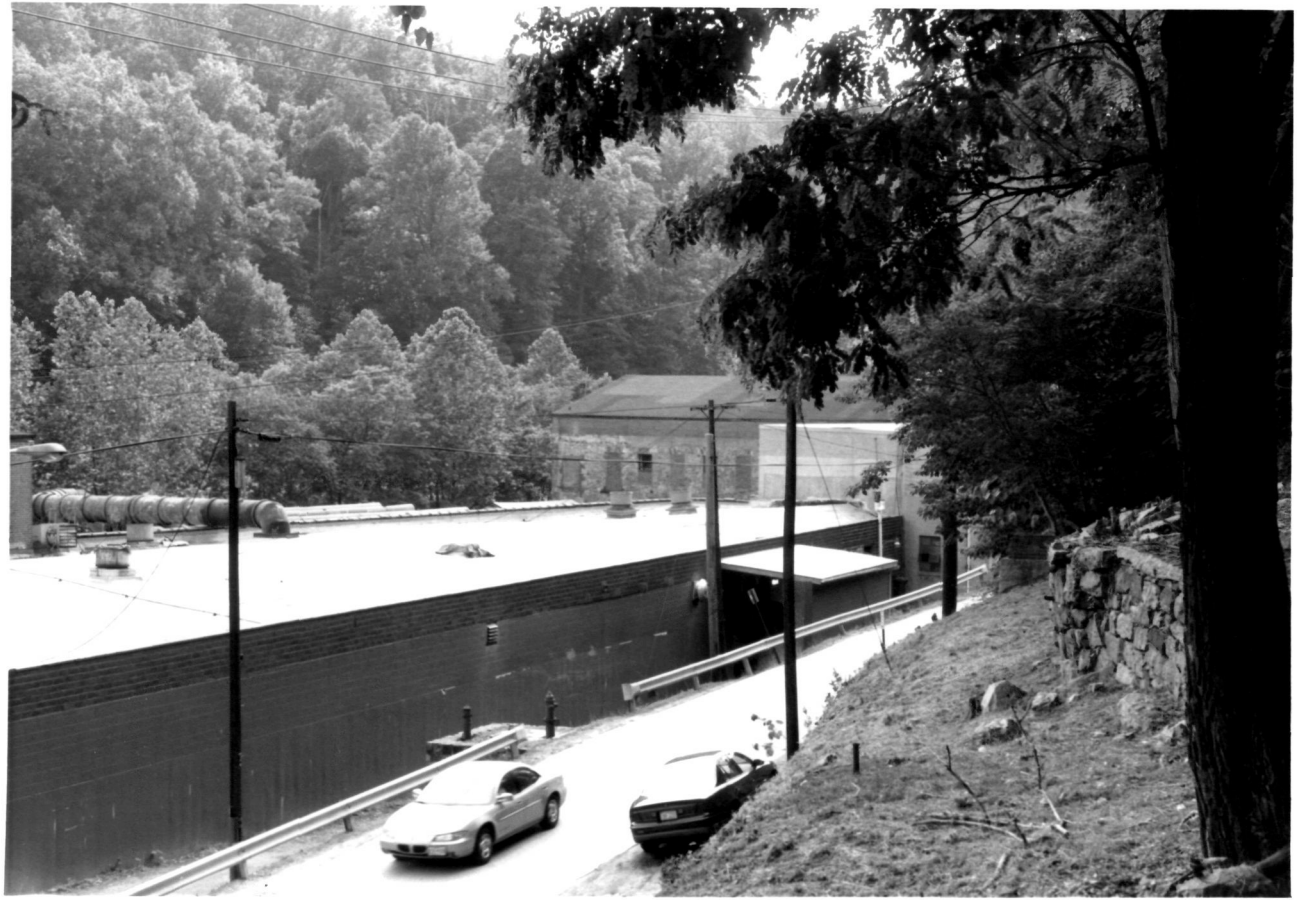

BA 144
THISTLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY
BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND
HENRY K. SHARP
JUNE 1999
MARYLAND SHPO
VIEW WEST
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BA 144
THISTLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY
BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND
HENRY K. SHARP
JUNE 1999
MARYLAND SHPO
DETAIL, ORIGINAL MILL BUILDING, VIEW WEST
5/5

Maryland
Baltimore County
District I
on the Patapsco River

BA-144
Ilchester Mills

Q3014N5314

1837

Two brothers, George and William Morris, natives of Scotland, set up a cotton print mill, known as "Thistle Factory." Substantial granite stone buildings and Welsh type stone mill houses for the workers.

Situated on 106 acres of land, 10 miles west of Baltimore.

(First HABS Report)
E. Frances Offutt
HABS COMMITTEE OF BALTIMORE
COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

July 29, 1965